

Note on some Coins of the Koch Kings.—By E. A. GAIT, I.C.S.

(With Plate XXIV.)

[Read July, 1895.]

Several new coins of the Koch dynasty have recently come to light, and as very little is generally known regarding these coins, I propose to describe briefly the different specimens which I have seen. Marsden describes coins of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa and Prāṇa Nārāyaṇa only (MCCIII and MCCV), the dates on which he reads as Çaka 1649 and 1666 respectively. The symbol read by Marsden as a six is a curious figure closely resembling the English figure 5, and strangely enough, there can be no possible doubt that it is used to represent 5 on the coins under reference. The symbol in question is a common one, not only on Koch coins, but also on the coins of the Āhōm, Jaintiā and Tippera kings. It is not a six, as it often appears in conjunction with the usual symbol for that figure, *e.g.* on the coin of Çiva Simha given in Marsden (MCLIII), who in this case correctly reads it as a 5, and on a coin of Vijaya Nārāyaṇa of Tippera. Again in the case of many Āhōm coins, where we have a very accurate chronology apart from the testimony of coins, the dates on the coins agree perfectly with those recorded in the Burañjis if the symbol is read as 5, but not otherwise. So with the two Koch coins under discussion. The approximate dates of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa are 1584–1622 A. D. and of Prāṇa Nārāyaṇa 1627–1666 A. D. Now if the symbol be read as 6, the dates given above will utterly disagree with those on the coins, whereas if it be read as 5, the dates on the coins will be 1549 and 1555 Çaka, or 1627 and 1633 A. D. In this case, the latter will fall within the period during which the king whose name it bears reigned, while in the case of the former there is only a slight discrepancy which may be explained either by assuming a small error in the date assigned by tradition as marking the close of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa's reign, or by a mistake in the reading of the third figure. The latter is, I think, more likely for the reason given below.

There is a coin of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa in the possession of the Society,¹ the date on which is 1509 Çaka, and another coin of the same date has been described in the *Aruṇōdai* (an Assamese Vernacular Magazine) of March 1851. I have in my possession a third coin, also dated Çaka 1509. It will be noticed that the third figure in the specimen reproduced by Marsden is somewhat blurred, and I am inclined to think that the real date of this coin also is 1509 Çaka. There must in any case be some mistake about the date reported by Marsden to be on another coin of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa (No. MCCIV) which unfortunately has not been reproduced by him. He gives the date of the coin in question as Çaka 1659. Allowing for the misreading of the second figure this would be 1559, whereas the coin of Prāṇa-nārāyaṇa already referred to bears date 1555. Most probably, the true date on this coin also is Çaka 1509.

An earlier coin than either of the above was found some years ago in the Gāro Hills, and described in the *Journal*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, XLIV, page 306. This is a coin of Nara-nārāyaṇa, the second and greatest Koch King, and is dated Çaka 1477 (Plate XXIV, 1). I have procured two more specimens of this king's coins, both bearing the same date, but differing in the shape of the letters, while one of them has the word *Bhūpālasya* inserted after Nārāyaṇa (Plate XXIV, 2).

A careful search for coins of this dynasty has been in progress for some time past, but it has only resulted in the discovery of one new full coin, which has been presented to the Society by the owner, Babu Tanurām, Mauzadar of Hastinapur in Barpetā. The reading of this coin is :—

Obverse.—Çr Çr Raghu-dēva-nārāyaṇa-pālasya Çākē 1510.

Reverse.—Çr Çr Hara-gaurī-caraṇa-kamala-madhukarasya.

Particular interest attaches to this coin, because while the others all belong to Nara-nārāyaṇa or his descendants who ruled in the Western Koch Kingdom, this is the first specimen which has come to light which bears the name of a king of the Eastern Kingdom.² Raghu-dēva or Raghu Rāi as he is called in the *Vaṃçāvalī* of Rājā

¹ Procured for me two years ago by Babu Mādhav-candra Bardalai, Sub-Divisional officer of Barpeta, *vide Proceedings*, August 1893, page 146. [The date shown in the *Proceedings* (1069) is a misprint].

² For the genealogy of these kings, see my paper on the Koch Kings of Kāmarūpa, *Journal*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXII page 305. I take this opportunity to correct a misprint on the page in question; the date in the sixth line from the bottom should be 1658 A. D. and not 1558 A. D. The coin here referred to was exhibited to the Society in May 1895, *vide Proceedings* for that month.

Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa,¹ came to the throne in 1583 A. D. So the coin was minted five years after his accession, and one year later than the coins issued by his contemporary, Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa, the ruler of the Western Kingdom.

I now come to the half coins of the Koch Kings, regarding which there has been much misconception amongst numismatists. Only one such coin is mentioned by Marsden, who attributes it, on the authority of Tavernier, to a Rājā named Maton Shāh, whose territory is said to be situated "beyond the first range of mountains bordering Hindustan to the north."

Another specimen is given in Prinsep's *Indian Antiquities*, Vol. II, page XLV (No. 6), where it is described as a Cachar Coin of Çr Girīça-candra-nārāyaṇa.

Several specimens of these half coins were procured for me by Babu Mādhav-candra Bardalai two years ago, and noticed briefly in the *Proceedings* for August 1893 (page 146). When touring in the Eastern Duārs last January, I found that some varieties of these coins are still common and succeeded in getting a few useful specimens from the villagers.

The difficulty which has hitherto been felt in identifying these half coins lies in the fact that the legends on them are incomplete,—the method of manufacture adopted being apparently to strike a full coin and then to make half coins by stamping out the centre. It is thus impossible to read the legend on any individual coin without some clue, but starting with the assumption that they are coins of the Koch Kings and knowing the legends which are usually found on the full coins, it is no longer difficult to see that the reading of all the half coins is as follows :—

Obverse.—Çr Çr mat (name of king) -nārāyaṇasya Çākē (date).

Reverse.—Çr Çr Çiva-carāṇa-kamala-madhukarasya.

No half coin contains the whole of this legend, but as the portion stamped out is seldom the exact centre of the coin, a comparison of one coin with another shows that the above is undoubtedly the correct reading of these coins. Unfortunately the names of the kings in whose reigns they were minted are nearly always incomplete, and it is seldom that more can be read from them than the last two or three letters. We can however identify some of them by comparing the terminal letters with those of the Koch rulers of the western kingdom,

¹ He is called Raghu-dēva in the inscription in the temple of Hayagrīva at Hājo, which is quoted in the paper mentioned in the last footnote, and which bears date Çaka 1505.

of whom a list is given in Hunter's *Statistic Account of Koch Bihār.* They are :—

Nara-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1534–1584 A. D.
Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1584–1622 A. D.
Vīra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1622–1627 A. D.
Prāṇa-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1627–1666 A. D.
Mada-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1666–1681 A. D.
Vasudēva-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1681–1683 A. D.
Mahēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1683–1695 A. D.
Rūpa-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1695–1715 A. D.
Upēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1715–1764 A. D.
Dēvēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1764–1766 A. D.
Dhairyēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1766–1771 A. D.
Rājēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1771–1773 A. D.
Darēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1773–1780 A. D.
Dhairyēndra-nārāyaṇa (again)	...	...	1780–1783 A. D.
Harēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1783–1839 A. D.
Çivēndra-nārāyaṇa	...	...	1839–1847 A. D.

With these data, it would in any case seem probable that the coins (Nos. 3 and 4) referred to in the *Proceedings* for August 1893, were minted in the reign of Prāṇa-nārāyaṇa, and I have now procured another similar coin which places the matter beyond doubt, as the whole name (𑂣𑂗𑂢) is perfectly legible on it (Plate XXIV, 3).

The coin in the Society's Collection on which the termination of the king's name is 𑂣𑂗 is clearly a coin of Upēndra-nārāyaṇa (Plate XXIV, 4).

There remain a number of coins which show the termination of the king's name to be 𑂣, 𑂣𑂗 or 𑂣𑂗. As there are several kings whose names end with these letters, it is difficult to identify these coins with any degree of certainty, and it is not improbable that some were minted by one king and others by another. I have recently procured a coin on which the whole name Çivēndra-nārāyaṇa can be clearly read (Plate XXIV, 5), and another in which the letter preceding the 𑂣 seems to be *r* and not *v*,¹ so that it must be a coin of either Darēndra-nārāyaṇa or Harēndra-nārāyaṇa (Plate XXIV, 6).

Lastly there is a coin on which the termination of the name seems to be *āndra*, which does not fit in with any of the names of Koch Kings quoted above (Plate XXIV, 7). Another peculiarity about this

¹ The letter is similar to the Assamese *r*, in which the sign distinguishing this letter from *v* is a bar across the triangle and not a dot below it, as is the case in Bengali.

coin is that there is a small letter *s* above the *ndra*, the meaning of which is not very clear.

The above coins are all of silver, but I have also seen some copper coins; brass coins are also not unknown.

When commencing the discussion of these half coins, their identity with Koch coins, was referred to as 'assumed.' There can however be no doubt that they really are Koch coins, for apart from the fact that their language, character and legends are identical with those of the full coins of the Koch dynasty, we have seen that two of them bear the full names of Koch Kings (Prāṇa-nārāyaṇa and Çivēndra-nārāyaṇa). As already stated, they are still common in the Eastern Duars where they are well known as "*Nārāyaṇī* rupees."

It will be seen that the above account of the coinage of the Koch Kings is not very complete but it contains a notice of all the coins which I have hitherto met with. The search for other coins of this dynasty is still being continued, and it is hoped that in course of time more may come to light.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since the above note was written, I have had an opportunity of examining the collection of Koch Coins in the British Museum, which includes those described in Marsden's work.

There are in all, five coins of Lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa, and there is no doubt that the date on all of them is 1509 Çaka, although in one or two cases the third figure is somewhat defective.

There is, I find, a coin of Raghu-dēva in the Museum, similar in all respects to that noticed in the Society's proceedings for May last. The collection includes three full coins of Prāṇa-nārāyaṇa, two of which bear date 1555 Çaka; the date on the third coin is not decipherable.

The half coins of the Koch Kings are kept in a separate tray, which was originally labelled "Bhotan," but this was subsequently altered to "Kachār," presumably on the authority of Prinsep (*Ind. Antiq.* Vol. II. p. XLV). This tray contains several half coins not mentioned in the above note, *viz.*, of Mada-nārāyaṇa, Rūpa-nārāyaṇa and Dhairyēndra-nārāyaṇa. There are several coins in the collection with "āndra" on the termination of the King's name, and it is noted against one of them that it is reported by Jenkins (General Jenkins) to be a Bhotia forgery.

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